

Redundant Chapter 7: Isolte's Marriage Hunting - First part

Translators: Pielord Miniman

Editors/Proofreaders : King of the End, Doihaveto

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Part 1

A long, long time ago.

In the days before the school of the Water God Style.

A certain country was frightened of the Water Dragon King.

Their fishermen had encroached on his territory, and incurred his wrath.

As a result, each day, their fishing boats were attacked, and water dragons frequently appeared in the port town.

The knight order attempted to resist, but due to the dragons' massive size and their ability to move freely through the water the country was rapidly pushed towards ruin.

They were on the precipice of destruction.

In this situation, the gloomy King declared that he would offer both his crown and daughter's hand to any who could subdue the Water Dragon King.

The many knights, brave men, and Heroes who took up the challenge met their end torn to pieces at the hands of the Water Dragon King.

What appeared then was a man carrying a single worn out sword, clad in worn out rags.

Dramatizations of this ancient tale depicted him as a splendidly handsome man, but this couldn't have been farther from the truth. His true visage could elicit only one word. Vagrant.

His name was Raydel.

Raydel volunteered before the king saying,

"I will defeat him. Everything will be ok."

With this, the King consented to his challenge.

Many thought he would give up halfway, as there was no way such a sloppy man could do anything.

But Raydel was strong.

He froze over the surface of the ocean, putting a stop to the water dragons' movements. Within a blink of an eye, he approached the Water Dragon King.

Having broken out of the ice, the writhing Water Dragon King rushed to attack Raydel.

With his worn out sword Raydel returned the Water Dragon King's unblockable strike slicing its head off with a single

slash.

With the Water Dragon King's head in hand, he returned to the country a Hero... Or so, he should have. The king gave him a fortune great enough to play around with for the rest of his life. That was all. He could not consent to giving his daughter and crown to this dirty man.

Raydel was not mad but he fell into a deep depression. He was in love with the princess. He loved the princess whom he had always watched from afar. Because his wish to marry the princess was not granted, he thought of leaving the country. Or should he have decided so, he could have easily become the king through sheer force. But there was someone who got angry in Raydel's stead. It was the princess.

While reprimanding the King the princess hit him, sent him flying, and left the castle. She chased after Raydel who was leaving the country and clung to his legs, saying:

"I have abandoned my country. I am no longer a princess, nor do I have a last name. Even if you obtain me, you won't be able to have the country, you won't be able to become king. But if that is still agreeable with you, please take me as your wife."

Raydel held the princess in his arms and left the country smiling. The two married soon after, then vanished.

Decades later. Somewhere in the world, the Water God Style was born.

And in accordance with that story a custom was born. "The spouse of the Water God shall abandon their household"

Part 2

Isolte Cruel. She is the person in charge of the Asura Kingdom's Water God style school, and the single instructor of the Asuran Knight Order. She is currently a Water Emperor, but just recently acquired the third out of the five secret techniques belonging to the Water God style. In a few months she will succeed the name of Water God.

Age unknown. Appearing in her twenties. Stunning blue-black hair and dignified features. Whoever saw her would admit she was beautiful. But rumour has it that she isn't really all that young. In the Asura Kingdom, the only person that knows her true age is Lady Ariel.

But now, this woman is currently searching for a marriage partner. Her long days of training to become the Water God are over. Although she'll still continue training, this is a turning point in her life, that is to say... She should seriously start considering marriage.

But her search for a husband is a difficult one.

Of course, that's not to say there's no one willing.
She'll soon be the Water God after all.
There are many who have approached her.

Such as fellow Water God style disciples.
Captivated by her beautiful appearance, there are few men whose hearts have not been touched by her sincere training.
That being said, they are swordsmen.
They are those who have decided to make a living through the sword.
There are few men tolerant enough to take on a wife stronger than themselves.
It was Isolte's condition that if they were a swordsman, then they would have to be as strong as her, or at least possess strength of the King class.

For Asuran nobles, female swordsmen have always been popular.
The passive women of the Water God style have a much softer and more graceful demeanour when compared to those of the assertive and violent Sword God style.
Isolte would also be well versed in the etiquette of the imperial court.
A young, pretty, well-spoken girl; the men would be all over her.
And on top of that, she's an established swordsman.
To have a woman like that serve as their wife and to be able to dishevel her in bed at night.
Many Asuran nobles approached her with those thoughts in mind.

Of course, those who approached her with perverted hobbies and vulgar laughs were refused.
But every now and then someone who would make her think "This person might be alright." comes along.
Good looking, good personality and fairly good sword skills.
Those kinds of good looking men are quite good at hiding their perverted interests while flashing a smile and drawing closer.
Very prince like.

Isolte could easily see through guys like that.
The people around would always end up saying things like "He's actually a scumbag, don't bother with him."
Those prince types have good outer relations.
If Isolte cared about such superficiality, she'd have already fallen.
Thinking thoughts like "Well, he'll do."

Even so, those very princes immediately turned her down upon hearing her condition.

"I will soon become the Water God and will name myself, Water God Reida Ria.
If you are to marry me, you must abandon your household.
The spouse of the Water God must not have a last name."

The custom of the Water God.

Not following it wouldn't be disadvantageous and following the custom most likely would not provide any benefit.
It is simply a tradition followed by generations of Water Gods.
Isolte's grandmother, previous Water God Reida also followed this tradition.
Because of this, Isolte's father also didn't possess a last name.
Cruel was the last name of her mother.

And so, Isolte, who greatly respected her grandmother, wished to follow in kind.

But unfortunately, the princes that attempted to fool Isolte were nobles.
They were born as nobles and have lived as nobles.

They had lived for appearances and superficiality.

Even if they were charmed by Isolte, there was none whom they would willingly abandon their family to marry.

Part 3

Isolte was troubled.

She'd been searching for a husband for several years now.

It mostly seemed to be going well, but things always tripped up at the last step.

"At this rate it looks like I won't be able to marry before the succession." Is what she thought.

She was confident.

She had good looks, cooking skill, and was well versed in make up.

There wasn't a day she missed the upkeep of her hair and skin.

She was well-versed in conversation as Water God style training included such skills in its curriculum.

Skills for provoking the opponent and taking the initiative.

Putting them into practise, flattery is simple.

But she was still having to exert herself.

Despite all that, she couldn't get married.

Even Eris and Nina had managed to find partners but she still couldn't.

Well it was probably because they had childhood friends.

There was no law that stated she had to marry.

But she still thought she could overcome that with her own charm.

She was self-conscious.

But she thought that her ideal partner would eventually show himself due to her unceasing effort.

"How many has it been now?"

"...That was the 21st."

21 people had now turned her down.

Including the one's she, herself had turned down, the number was much higher.

"I see."

Right now, Isolte was sitting in her living room facing her brother.

Isolte's brother, Tantris Cruel, was a high level Water God style swordsman.

He was the oldest son of the Cruel house but compared to his little sister, he couldn't be considered especially talented.

He put forth enough effort to make his blood run, but in the end he didn't have the talent to advance any higher.

But he's an honest man.

His grandmother, Reida, had told him "Maybe it's time to make you a saint class." but he had said "I don't need a title unbecoming of my stature." and rejected the offer.

Even when Reida was alive, he'd been in charge of the dojo's administration.

And he'd even looked after Isolte.

"Do you think you're aiming too high?"

"No I don't think..."

"You have a certain level of talent and standing. You have the right to choose a suitable partner. But if you're too picky and can't find anyone, there's no point."

"I understand that."

Isolte had always looked up to her brother.

The two of them had lost their parents at an early age.

Luckily their grandmother was the Water God and they didn't have to struggle to survive, but she was a busy woman and didn't have much time to look after the two of them.

At that time, it was Tantris who took over as the parent.

He had supported her after their parents died and raised her.

The school of swordsmanship is a world of ability.

The talented Isolte surpassed her brother in under 10 years.

But she never stopped looking up to him, and he never stopped supporting her.

"There's no need to think about the honour of the Cruel house.

Living as the Water God, a harsh fate no doubt awaits you.

Forget about status and lineage and pick someone you're comfortable with."

"..."

Tantris was already married and had a child.

Of course they had met with Isolte and talked with her about it.

But Isolte hadn't thought she was very likeable.

She was the daughter of an Asuran noble.

Her father had sent her to get married to create a relationship with the Water God Reida.

She obviously looked down on Tantris and had no understanding of Swordplay.

She had never once come to the dojo.

Aside from things relating to the children, the two mostly lived apart.

Isolte didn't want to marry someone like that.

It's exactly because of that, that Isolte had been so careful in choosing.

...Although her carefulness extended only to stripping away their facade's.

But she had stuck by the requirement of at least intermediate level swordsmanship.

She had no intention of fussing over lineage.

But now that she had become the main instructor, she would have many chances to meet with Ariel and talk to her and there were many coming to meet with her who wanted to take advantage of that.

A fallen noble, a commoner, or an adventurer would have been fine.

As long as they're able to make up for it in some other way.

"I have no intention of choosing."

"Then are you ok with someone I choose for you?"

"No, I should be allowed to search for my own partner."

And she was also very stubborn.

Of course there's also the fact that everyone Tantris recommended were nothing but muscleheads...

Although you couldn't call her picky, she absolutely wouldn't concede on her conditions.

It really didn't seem likely that she would be able to marry.

"Right..."

Tantris had no intention of blaming her.
It wouldn't be the first time the Water God was without a spouse.
And he could continue the Cruel line himself.
But he still wanted to help his little sister find happiness.
And if his sister wanted to find happiness in marriage, he wanted to support her.

That said, if she didn't want his help, he had no intention of pursuing.
Although he didn't have much talent, he was still a man of the Water God school.

"Oh right, Isolte, didn't Her Majesty summon you today?"

"...Yes."

"Are you fine on time?"

"I'm still good."

"Just in case, you shouldn't keep Her Majesty waiting. We'll stop the conversation here today. Have a safe trip."

"Yes brother.¹ I'll be off now."

Isolte said that, bowed, and returned to her own room.
After that she changed and headed for the Imperial Palace.
After seeing her off, Tantris breathed a sigh of relief.

"Haaa..."

At this rate it'll probably be impossible for her to get married before the succession ceremony.
After thinking that, Tantris returned to the dojo and resumed his instruction of the younger disciples.

Part 4

Isolte walked to the Asura Kingdom's Silver Palace.
The crest of the shield bearing battle girl carved onto the breastplate of the silver armour is one that is famed throughout the land.
Her white and blue coat fluttered through the air as she marched forward.

The patrolling soldiers stood at attention with admiration in their gazes as she walked towards the palace.

There isn't anybody in the Asuran Imperial Palace who doesn't know the name of the Water Emperor Isolte.
And there are many soldiers who yearn for her dignified figure.
By the way, there aren't many who know that she's been having thoughts along the lines of "I don't want to get married too late." or "I hope a good guy would fall from the sky."

"Why if it isn't Isolte-dono, where are you headed?"

The person standing in front of her was a single man.
He was short and lanky with thin hair, overall he seemed very timid.
He looked about 40 years old.

He was human, but if Rudeus saw him, he'd probably think "He's looks like a senile old man."²

No matter how you looked at him, he didn't seem like a knight or a swordsman, but he was wearing the same silver breast plate as Isolte.
But his armour had a slightly different design.
His crest was a girl praying with a rampart crown atop her head.

"Well if it isn't Lord Ifrit. My good graces to you sir."

"Ahh, be at ease. We are of the same rank, there is no need kneel."

Sylvester Ifrit.

One of the Seven Knights of Asura The 『King's Rampart』.

He with a name that didn't match his face, was the chief executive in charge of the defence of the Imperial Palace.

Isolte was only a knight.

Knights were of a fairly low class, whereas nobility was quite high.

And Sylvester held the highest position among all knights and soldiers, and was also a middle ranked noble.

Normally any servant who crossed his path would immediately fall to their knees.

"But..."

"We are both knights of Her Majesty."

In response to his sharp words, Isolte stood back up.

"That is sufficient. We do not work for the country, but for Her Majesty. The only person you should kneel before is Her Majesty, herself."

In response to Sylvester's rising aura, she swallowed her words and nodded.

Sylvester was of small stature.

He was prone to illness and could not be called strong.

He was in no way skilled with swords or magic.

And yet in spite of that, he had managed to graduate as the valedictorian of the knight academy.

He raises people up and is well versed at command.

He truly understood the meaning of the phrase, "Right person for the right job."

And for that one talent, Ariel dragged him out from an obscure corner of the country, called him back to the palace, and appointed him as her knight.

"By the way Isolte-dono, where might you be heading?"

"Her Majesty has called for me."

"If that is the case then you haven't the time to be wasting it with someone like me."

"Did you have some business with me?"

"It's nothing major.

There's simply a man I would like to introduce you to.

I hope you'll forgive the selfishness of my foolish son, but time permitting, if you are interested, I hope you'll at least have a couple of words with him."

This was a conversation Isolte very much was interested in.

She wanted to hear more about this foolish son of his.

But she was currently being called by her lord.

"I understand. When I have the time, I'll come and we can finish the conversation."

But she simply said that with a stiff face and headed off

On her way to the inner palace, the amount of people decreased.

The simply dressed soldiers began to become scarce, being replaced by lavish knights.

These lower ranked nobles, befitting of their titles' as knights, had all pledged allegiance to Ariel.

Those who had an extremely small chance of betrayal.

And in the inner section of the inner palace, there were even fewer people.
By now the soldiers and knights had disappeared and she was walking through an empty hallway.
Occasionally, there was a frighteningly sharp looking maid - The Imperial Maids - passing by.
These Imperial Maids were personally chosen by Ariel.
There possibility of betrayal was even lower.

Ariel was in the 『King's Chamber』 .
Standing in front of the extravagant door was a single man.
He was completely covered in golden armour and holding a giant battleaxe.
The Asura Kingdom's greatest gatekeeper.
The possibility of him betraying Ariel was non-existent.

"Isolte Cruel! Reporting for summons!"
"...Yessir."

Doga had received Isolte's introduction and slowly moved.
They seemed like clunky movements.
But Isolte couldn't see a single opening.
If it came to it, he could swing that battleaxe of his at terrifying speeds.
And if it came to it, breaking past this man and passing through the door behind him would be nigh on impossible.

"...Hm?"

Doga had extended his hand towards Isolte.
Isolte saw that and looked confused.

Doga had a simple face.
It wasn't crude but Isolte wasn't fond of it.
Being searched by someone like that sparked a slight amount of resistance in her.

"Body search? Go ahead."

But this was the Queen's room.
And obviously, even her knights could not be permitted to bring weapons into the room.
Doga understood that weapons could not be brought into her room.
Even against the prime minister of the Asura Kingdom, Doga would still carry out his meticulous search and not even the smallest of things would get past him.

The body search was a matter of course.
While wondering if he was going to touch her breasts, Isolte silently decided to bear with it.

"Yessir."

But Doga didn't touch her.
What his extended hand had touched was her hair.
Doga moved his hand up to her hair and grabbed something out of it

"...?"

In Doga's fingers was a flower petal.

"Follow me."
"?"

"Isolte is pretty, so you can't have these kinds of things on you."

Doga was smiling under his helmet.
Isolte stood there stiff with a blank expression.

"Aah, my weapon."

Isolte suddenly thought that and unfastened her sword belt and presented it to Doga.
Doga didn't even take that.

"Isolte is Ariel-sama's knight. For you to protect Ariel, a weapon is necessary."
"..."

He didn't conduct a body search.
He didn't take her weapon.
He trusted her as Ariel's knight.
The man who possessed the ability to join the 5 fingers of the Asura Empire.
Thinking about it like that, her heart rate slightly increased.

(No, not with that face...)

She took a deep breath to calm her buzzing head.

"Isolte Cruel! Entering!"
"Come in."

She waited for Ariel's response and entered.

Part 5

The Seven Knights of Asura.
With Luke Notos Greyrat, the 『King's Dagger』 as the head, they are seven knights who have sworn absolute allegiance to Ariel herself.
Even among knights they possessed a special position and independent movement was permitted to some extent.

Isolte was also a member.
The 『King's Greatshield』 .
To defend the King at all times, a fitting name for a Water God style swordsman.

Isolte, Sylvester, Doga.
These three are known as the 『Three Knights of the Left』 .
Among the seven knights of Asura their main job was the protection of Ariel.

But Isolte felt something was off.

The seven knights of Asura were knights who had pledged absolute allegiance to Ariel.
At least that's what was said.
Because Isolte hadn't gathered with them and met them yet, she wasn't deeply informed about them.
They may have pledged loyalty to Ariel, but most of them are unrelated to the Asura kingdom, having been gathered from outside.

They most likely each have their own reasons to unconditionally serve Ariel.

But Isolte was different.
Isolte had a reason to betray.

The previous Water God.
The moment when her grandmother had died.

The death of the previous Water God Reida
During Ariel's battle for the crown she had been killed by Ariel's supporter, the Dragon God, Orsted.

Of course, it had happened during a battle.
Isolte was a warrior who had no intention of harbouring unnecessary emotions after a battle had come to a close.
This was because before she was Isolte's grandmother, she was the Water God.
If she were to defy Ariel, more so than the Asura Empire, the Water God school would see to her banishment.
And thus, she wouldn't think of defying Ariel.
Isolte's resolve was clear on that.

But no matter how sure of it she was herself, if all she had was words, nobody could be certain it was the truth.
Nobody could see the depths of another's heart.
It was entirely possible that after her grandmother had been killed, she had been secretly harbouring hatred and secretly aiming for Ariel's life.
Or maybe instead of Ariel, she could be aiming for the perpetrator, Orsted.

In truth, when Ariel was taking the crown, she had a large number of knights and nobles killed.
And the amount of people who still hold grudges was not small.
They continue their everyday lives having pledged loyalty to Ariel, awaiting their opportunity.

It wouldn't be strange for Isolte to be thinking the same way.

Isolte had sworn the knights oath and pledged loyalty to Ariel.
But it wasn't because of Ariel's personality, nor was it due to patriotism.
It was to protect her honour and place as Water God.
She was currently protecting their relationship of mutual trust, but if that was jeopardised, it's possible that she couldn't guarantee absolute loyalty.

It's not as if she thought of betrayal.
It's simply that the possibility exists.
That's something that Isolte herself understood.

And yet in spite of that, she was chosen as one of the seven.

She was uneasy.
There had to be some kind of catch.

"Isolte, do you have any intention of considering a marriage candidate of my referral?"

Which is why, even in the face of that suggestion, she was weary.

"Why would your Majesty mention such a proposal?"

"To me, having you, the Water God, settle down with a family would be a plus to your work.

The candidates are all of my blood, and there are many who possess rather particular sexual dispositions among them... But there has to be one who matches your tastes."

"Of your blood... Do you mean to say that they're royalty!?"

"Yes, that is the case."

A marriage interview with royalty.
Hearing that did not cause excitement in Isolte.

It was of little matter.

"But when I become the Water God they will have to abandon their household, for royalty, isn't that somewhat inconvenient?"

"Even without the name, their blood still remains. They do not have to actively cut off their family do they?"

"That is the case."

"It's fine. They all acknowledge this condition.

They have been promised that if they marry you, the support of the royal family will not be withdrawn.

All you need to do is meet with them and pick the most good natured out of the bunch."

This was definitely a ploy to win her over, is what Isolte thought.

Because the conditions were too favourable.

Ariel's relatives, royalty.

They may only be a branch, but these are people who could be called genuine princes.

They aren't the sons of nobles, they are people, no matter how small, have the possibility to become king. A true Prince.

And all those of the Asuran royal family are good looking and refined.

"How does it sound? It's not a bad deal right?"

"Please allow me!"

Isolte gave an immediate reply.

She didn't have a reason to refuse.

If she was a sly Asuran noble, she may have taken the time to consider the hidden meaning behind Ariel's words.

But unfortunately she was just a swordsman.

Although she may have been a girl searching for a husband.

She didn't care about anything complex.

"Then sometime in the near future we'll begin the marriage interviews. Please convey to Luke or Sylvester on which days you are free. You can leave the rest to me."

"Yes ma'am, I thank you for your kindness."

"Understood. Then, you may leave."

Isolte withdrew from Ariel's private room in a dreamy state of mind.

(A marriage interview with royalty...)

Isolte was somewhat light on her feet and her heart was beating with excitement.

She was going to go tell Sylvester to book her closest day off.

When she thought that, she suddenly realised that she was quite thirsty.

It must have been nervousness from being called out for an unknown reason.

"I'm quite thirsty..."

"Yessir."

While mumbling to herself, suddenly being called out to from behind caused Isolte to fall into stance and turn around.

And Doga was standing there.

The huge man standing there with the small cup.

"Here, it's cold."

"Thank you very much."

Isolte took it and after wondering for a moment whether there was poison in it, drank it down.
Like Doga said, it was cold as if it had been ice just moments ago and her thirst was quenched.
Feeling the water permeate the depths of her body, she realised that she was far more nervous and tired than she had thought.

“...Haaa.”

“Isolte, good work.”

Doga drank some water took a breath and gave a smile.
Even through the helmet, she could tell that that smile had no ulterior motives and was simply an honest gesture.

“ ... ”

She was a perceptive person.
She realised that she wouldn't hesitate to leave her back to this man.
Although she wasn't fond of his face.

“Good work to you too Doga. Best wishes with your guard duty.”
“Yessir.”

Well that's something in and of itself.
Reminding herself of the upcoming marriage interviews, that she'd be spending the next few days absorbed in, she cut off the conversation and walked off smiling.

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Author Q&A

Q: Not being able to beat Doga even after becoming the water God, does this mean that her ability is below the World Power class?

A: It's not that she can't win.

It's just that she practises defence techniques, so breaking past Doga to get into the room would be quite hard.

Q: Isolte-san is worn out!

A: It's just that she doesn't have an eye for people.
She's quite capable as a swordsman.

Q: Is Doga's face bad?

A: He has a harmless looking face.
He's a looks like a good person.

Translator Notes and References

1. Aniue.

2. Literally "Windowsill race" and it's an expression that means old employees that have been given menial tasks until they retire.

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Redundant Chapter 8: The Gatekeeper Doga - First Part

Translators: Pielord Miniman

Editors/Proofreaders : Diohaveto, King of the End, Manch

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Part 1

In the Asura Kingdom there's a group known as the Seven Knights of Asura. They are those who have pledged absolute loyalty to Ariel Anemoi Asura.

Leading them:

The 『King's Dagger』 Luke Notos Greyrat.

In charge of offence are the Three Knights of the Left-Wing:

The 『King's Greatsword』 Sándor von Grandeur.

The 『King's Halberd』 Oswald Eurus Greyrat.

The 『King's Hound』 Ghyslaine Dedorudia.

In charge of defence are the Three Knights of the Right-Wing:

The 『King's Gatekeeper』 Doga.

The 『King's Rampart』 Sylvester Ifrit.

The 『King's Greatshield』 Isolte Cruel.

Seven people.

There are those whose birth and descent are clear,

but others were those who Ariel and Luke had personally scouted.

From commoners and lower ranked nobles to high ranking officials, there was even a half Immortal among them.

But what they shared was their undying loyalty towards Ariel.

While Isolte is pondering the true meaning behind the “particular” in Ariel's statement “rather particular sexual dispositions”, let's take a look at one of those knights.

Part 2

He was born in a small village of the Asura Kingdom's Donati province.

He was a little slow and treated like a henchman by the other kids.
But his body was strong and he never got sick.

His father was a soldier who protected the village and spent most of his days away.
There were very few soldiers so he didn't get many days off and ended up spending most nights away from home.

When the boy was around 5 years old, his little sister was born.
She was a sweet girl just like her mother.
But the mother had a difficult time recovering from childbirth and passed away.

The boy cried.
He was hit by his friends and he was stung by a bee, but the stupefied boy continued to cry.
The crying boy's father said this to him:

"Right now you can cry, but when you stop, you have to protect this girl."

Holding his little sister, the boy looked up at his father and nodded many times over.
And that day, the boy stopped crying.

The next day the boy began faithfully practising to realise his father's command.
The command to protect his sister.

To protect his sister he began to guard the entrance to his house.
The whole day, holding a hatchet he found in the corner of the house, he stood at the entrance.
Only when his sister cried did he leave his post, in order to comfort her.

Seeing his figure, his friend laughed.
"The hell you doing?" he said.
"You can just watch from inside," he said.

The adults of the village had said this to him:
"If you want you can leave your sister to us."
"There are already plenty of children at our house so one more won't matter."

But the boy firmly refused to hear it.
He had them teach him how to take care of her, but he would not entrust his sister to anyone else.

One day.
An incident occurred at the village.
In the middle of the night, something had snuck into the barn and laid waste to the livestock.

From the footprints' size it was judged to be a wolf.
Soldiers were running around telling the villagers to stay inside and lock their doors.

The next day.
A single house had been attacked.
The wolf had gotten in through who knows where, instantly bit off a child's head, and escaped through a window.
After waking up, without knowing what happened, the family simply chased after the blood trail.
And on the outskirts of town, finding children's clothing in a pool of blood, they went crazy.

These two incidents made the soldiers realise that they were mistaken in their judgement.
It wasn't a wolf that was hiding in the village, but a magic beast.
It was only the size of a regular wolf, but it was a cunning magic beast.

The perpetrator was a magic beast.
Its head and hind legs were that of a wolf's.
But from the shoulder down it was a monkey. It could walk on two legs and climb trees.
It was only about the size of a large dog.
But its head was oddly large in comparison to its body.
And that head gave it intelligence.
It was a mutated magic beast.

The magic beast who wondered what humans tasted like, was lurking in the wheat fields as if ridiculing the frightened villagers, searching for its next target.

But the adults didn't return to the field that day.
The wolf chased after them but looked in the wrong place.
What was left in the house were two children.

The magic beast, licking its lips, used its monkey arms to climb the chimney, descending into the fireplace.

The next day.
The boy's father who had finished his patrol saw a trail of blood coming from his own house.
"This can't be," he thought with an ashen face as he ran inside his house. He soon found the cruel corpse of the figure left behind.

It was the corpse of the magic beast.
The corpse of the beast with its head smashed open.

And between the corpse and his daughter was his son, standing imposingly, clutching his hatchet.

He could see that the beast was dead.
The boy was covered in blood and his arm was broken.
But that was all.

The magic beast was small but it did resemble a wolf.
It was several times bigger than the boy.
And in spite of that, the boy had beaten it to death with his blunt hatchet.

He had protected his sister.

That was the boy's — who would later become known at the North Emperor Doga — first battle.

Part 3

From thereon the life of the gatekeeper Doga continued.
When he was ten, he protected the entrance to his village.

Right before the teleport incident, a wild stampede of magic beasts occurred .
They swelled forth from a forest in the kingdom and some number of villages suffered.
Some were even engulfed and completely destroyed.

Doga's village was among those attacked.
But Doga, with his dauntless courage and hatchet, diverted the swarm.
It's said that he defeated nearly a hundred beasts during the battle,
And although he had defeated so many, his father had passed away during.

Doga simply stood bewildered next to his father's body.
The knights who saw Doga's courage recommended him to the imperial garrison.
Seeing Doga hesitate for the sake of protecting his sister, they said this:

"Listen boy, we've been separated from our families and move all over the kingdom protecting villages.
In other words, we protect the very country itself.
As long as the country is at peace, our families can live in safety.
Meaning that protecting the country is protecting your family."

At that time, the simple-minded Doga didn't understand those words.
In the end, what caused Doga to move was money.
After his father had died, he needed money. He had heard that he would be able to get the money for the two of them to live in the Imperial capital and decided to move there.

Doga entered the Imperial army.
He was in charge of protecting a small gate cutting off the slums from lower class residences.
In case those of the slums tried to riot, it would create a bottleneck preventing them from swarming.
Besides the fact that passage was prohibited at night, it wasn't a particularly important gate.

He and his sister had been allocated a single room.
It was small, but it was home.
He would commute from there to his post each day and man it from dawn till dusk and sometimes even all night.

Doga was a simple man, but he had a strange charm to him.
At first the other soldiers didn't look kindly towards a ten year old working with them and there were many who harassed him.
But due to his honest personality and his resolute attitude towards his sister, his co-workers began to relax somewhat and in about a year's time began to recognise Doga as a comrade.

Two years later.
One night, a certain girl ran towards the gate he was guarding.
The girl clung to Doga and asked him to save her.
While Doga was hesitating, a group of men with harsh glares appeared and yelled, "Hand us the woman!".
Doga was bewildered and had no idea what to do.
If Doga's watch partner Hans hadn't been dozing off, he probably could have come to a decision.

The woman, seeing Doga confused, quickly ran towards the gate.
Doga immediately grabbed her by the back of the neck and pulled her back,
Because passage is prohibited during the night.

But in that instant,
Sensing that the woman was trying to run away, they gave chase.
Doga swung his battleaxe.
He had gotten the axe as a farewell gift from the village blacksmith.

All of them died.
Seeing Doga covered in blood, the woman wet herself and sunk to the ground.

Hans woke from the noise and was taken aback by the scene before him.
"This is bad," he thought.
Doga, who had killed them all, would be punished.
And he, who had been dozing off, would also be punished.

While thinking that, with his face ghastly white, he went to confirm the bodies.
After seeing their faces, he realised that they were members of the violent thieves' guild that had mixed in with the lower class citizens.
The knights stationed at the slums were lacking manpower and couldn't do very much to them.

But Doga had annihilated them all.

Doga was promoted.
From a soldier who protected the entrance to the slums,
To guarding the gate that connects the lower and middle class districts.
And for some reason Hans came with him.

Doga continued to protect that gate for some time after that.
Through rain and wind he continued to protect it.
Even as he grew up he continued to protect it.
Hans had saved the simple Doga.
Eventually, Hans became the person who understood Doga the best.

And in that time, his little sister grew more and more beautiful and married Hans.
Or maybe, Hans had been aiming for Doga's sister.
But to Doga, it didn't matter either way.
Because, although Hans was always sleepy, he wasn't a bad guy.
For his sister's sake, Doga bore witness to their vows to Saint Millis.

And Doga was alone.
Now that his sister was married, he thought about how he had completed his father's order to the very end.
There wasn't any need to guard the gate anymore.

But Doga continued to guard it.
Through rain and wind he continued to protect it.

One day, massive news spread like a wave all throughout the capital.
It was declared that Ariel Anemoi Asura would be crowned Queen.
For several days, festivals continued throughout the city.
Doga and his comrades were excited and Hans was jumping for joy.

But a soldier's work increased during a festival.
Their guard post was moved from the middle class district to somewhere else.
The kingdom was recruiting temporary civilian soldiers, so real soldiers like Doga were given much more important duties.
And in turn, their wages increased.
Doga and Hans thought they could use the extra money to buy his sister something nice and worked hard.

On a certain day before the coronation.
Due to some twist of fate, Doga was stationed at the back door of the palace.
It was a fairly disused door where occasionally someone with a permit would come through.
Hans wasn't with him.

Doga was with several other soldiers.
A single man wearing a worn-out armour and holding a long pole came along.
He said:

"Could you let me through here? I'd like an audience with Her Majesty Ariel."

Of course the guards refused him.

"You may not pass without permission! Show us your permit!"

"I don't have a permit, but I'd like an audience with Her Majesty Ariel."

"You may not pass without a permit! Leave!"

"Then it can't be helped. I thought I might have darkened Her Majesty's authority on this auspicious day, I'm glad I came through this back door."

The man said that and began to force his way through.

His pole moved like magic and the other guards were defeated in an instant.

Only Doga remained.

No matter how many times the pole was thrust at his vitals, Doga continued to stand and protect the gate.

But at the same time, Doga's axe didn't hit the man even once.

Having his axe miss was a first for Doga, but he continued to single-mindedly swing.

The man was extremely happy to fight Doga.

"Wonderful! For a man like this to be buried here!

Right, For your sake I'll give up on this gate.

I'm really sorry about this.

As an apology, would you be willing to become my disciple?

You'll definitely become strong, you have talent!."

Doga didn't understand what the man was saying.

Hearing that the man was going to give up on the gate caused Doga to hesitate for an instant

It truly was but an instant.

And when Doga awoke, the man was still there.

Doga picked up his axe and stood to protect the gate.

But he was surrounded by a large number of soldiers.

"Well good morning! I protected the gate in your stead!"

That was how Doga met Sándor, North God Kalman the Second, Alex C Ryback.

Part 4

The day he became Sándor's disciple, Doga returned to his house, collapsed on his bed, and slept like a log.

Thanks to the healing magician that came with the reinforcements, there wasn't a single wound left on him.

But his battle with North God Kalman had completely emptied his nearly bottomless stamina.

It was the first time in his life that he had collapsed from exhaustion.

After sleeping for two straight days, he awoke.

Next to his bed was his crying sister and a relieved Hans.

And Sándor with a happy look on his face.

"Morning! Now my disciple, let us be off!"

Sándor used his tremendous strength to lift Doga to his feet and after Doga had put his armour on, he began to drag him out to who knows where.

Doga, without knowing what from, asked Hans to save him.

"Sorry Doga, but it doesn't seem like a bad thing.
I don't have any idea what's going on either but I think it's a pretty prestigious offer.
So well, why don't you just give it a try? Work hard, I'll be heading out now."
"Ok. Brother, good luck."

Although Hans had seemed to understand the basic gist of it, Doga was still confused.
But he didn't have the strenght to go against Sándor, and they headed to the gate he guarded yesterday.
After they reached the gate, Sándor took out a rather gaudy permit and they passed through.

And before long they were in the inner palace.
While Doga was constantly surprised by the dazzling rooms around them, Sándor had noticed something.
What they had seen was the beautiful golden haired woman in front of them.

"Is that him?"
"Yes Your Majesty!"
"I'd like to talk to him."

Coming out from behind Sándor, Doga stood in front of the woman.
The woman was extremely beautiful and above all sublime.

"I am Ariel Anemoi Asura. What would your name be?"

Doga didn't know that name.
Doga was on guard duty and hadn't heard her name at the coronation ceremony.
And of course, he hadn't seen her before either.

But once he realised, Doga fell to his knees.
Somehow he felt that he had to.

"I-I'm... Doga."
"Why did you become a soldier?"
"M-my dad told me to pr-protect my sister..."

Doga wasn't all that good at talking.
In all his life, although he listened to plenty of other people, he had never said very much.
But the words that came from his mouth had convinced Ariel.

"To protect your sister, a splendid goal."
"B-but, Hans is already protecting my sister, so Hans and my sister are together and um,"

The soldier next to Ariel had added "His sister is married to a soldier named Hans".
Doga didn't know, but it was Luke.

"So she doesn't really need me to protect her anymore..."

Doga looked downhearted as he said that but Ariel smiled.

"That is incorrect Doga."
"Hmm?"
"You cannot stop looking after her."
"What do you mean?"

"Hans has become your brother, so you must now protect both your brother and your sister. Your work has doubled."

Those words caused Doga a shock.
He hadn't thought about it like that before.
But she was correct.
Hans addressed Doga as a brother.
Hans was his brother.
If he was to protect his sister, he would obviously protect his brother.

"R-right! I have to keep protecting them!"
"Yes, but with your current method, it's possible that you may not be able to protect them both."
"Wha!? Why?"
"You are strong, but your arms are short. If those two are to fall into danger, it's possible that you may be too far to help."

Doga looked at his hands.
He remembered his father's death.
He had been close by, but had been killed by a beast outside of Doga's vision.

"Th-then, what should I do?"
"Protect me."
"Wha?"
"I work for the sake of the country to improve it. To protect me, is to protect this country. And to protect the country is to protect those two."

Doga didn't understand.
Why would protecting the person in front of him, protect those two?
He had no clue.

But the way Ariel said it had left him with no doubt.
And at the same time, he remembered something similar someone once said to him.
The knight who had recommended him to the imperial capital.

"Listen boy, we've been separated from our families and move all over the kingdom protecting villages.
In other words, we protect the very country itself.
As long as the country is at peace, our families can live in safety.
Meaning that protecting the country is protecting your family."

Back then, he hadn't understood.
Because he didn't get it, he moved for money.
But now, he somewhat understood.
Because Doga is protecting something in a completely different place, Hans and his sister can live in peace.

"Doga. Would you swear loyalty to me and protect not only I, but the kingdom as well?"
"Yes, Your Majesty."
"Then Doga, I now appoint you a knight."

That day, Doga became one of the Seven Knights of Asura.

Part 5

Since then, Doga had continued to protect the Final Door.
The Final Door, the entrance to the King's chambers.

At times he would head out on Ariel's orders.
Once a day, not too far from Ariel's door, he would receive instruction from Sándor.
And once a month on his day off, he would go visit his sister and Hans to eat with them.

When Doga wasn't around, someone else was protecting the king's door in his stead.
Much of the time it was the 『King's Greatshield』, Isolte Cruel.

But it wasn't like that to start with.
He was appointed a knight and presented with a shiny set of golden armour.
And after taking his post he did not move.
After he had decided to protect it, he couldn't leave it to someone with half hearted resolve.

For an entire month, he left the door to no one other than Sándor.
If he wasn't ordered to rest by Ariel, he would have continued standing there without even eating for days.
He would check anyone approaching the King's chambers.
Gender had no relevance, and would even take the smallest fork.

And in that time, someone had joined the Seven Knights.
The 『King's Greatshield』, Isolte Cruel.
She was the head instructor and in the time before Ghyslaine joined, was the only female member and eventually took the job of Ariel's personal guard.

One day.
Sándor, for the sake of finding members to join the Golden Knight Order, was to search the kingdom.
Without Sándor, Doga had no replacement.
After an entire month of standing without break, Doga collapsed.
Sándor decided that Isolte and Doga were to have a match.

At that point, Sándor named Doga a 『North King』.
Although Sándor had only recently started teaching him, Doga was quite skilled.

But it goes without saying, it was Isolte's overwhelming victory.
Doga's battleaxe was warded off like a gentle breeze. Time after time, he was countered and eventually defeated.
It was to the extent that if they had been using real swords, Isolte could have killed him in an instant if she wished.
Doga continued to attack Isolte with his inexhaustible stamina but couldn't lay a single finger on her and was defeated.

The slender woman who was like a flower, continued to blow off the axe that was bigger than herself and continued to attack.
As Doga took that hit over and over, he had to admit:
She was someone fit to protect the door in his stead.

And at the same time, he understood,
This woman was a graceful and lovely flower.
Something he could not touch.

Doga had fallen in love with Isolte.

Part 6

"You seem pretty down lately..."

Doga was having dinner with his sister's family when he was told that.
In front of the simple looking Doga were a number of dishes on the table.
And on the other side of the table was his sister and her husband Hans.
And sitting across from Hans was their daughter.
Doga was sitting there blankly filling his mug of wine to the brim.

"Are you not feeling well?"

"...Wh-why?"

Having perceived unrest in Doga's heart, Hans pointed to the food.

"Eat it all up alright."

Looking at it, it was obvious to see that he hadn't eaten much.

It was his beloved sister's cooking.

Normally, Doga would be wolfing down his food in silence, swallowing enough to make his cheeks bulge with a happy look on his face.

Along with his favourite wine.

He loved wine that was normally reserved for special occasions, so much so that he would even drink it here.

And for that reason, Hans made sure to always have a barrel ready at their house.

But for some reason, he hadn't even eaten half his food and the way he was drinking his wine seemed somehow worn out.

To those who knew Doga, something was definitely off.

"If you aren't feeling well, why don't you go see the castle's healers? You're already a knight, if you ask, surely they'd do that much for you? Well at least you don't look too bad."

"...?"

Doga puzzlingly tilted his head.

He himself didn't realise something was off.

"If you're tired, why not get a little more rest? I know that working as a guard for her majesty is a prestigious job and all. But if you were working too hard and collapsed, it wouldn't be a joke... Well, I can't really imagine you collapsing though."

"Yessir."

Doga nodded and started eating.

But he was definitely odd.

It was, as always, delicious.

But the second the food went down his throat, he felt something off.

Normally, he would chew and swallow so fast, you'd want to tell him to slow down.

But not this time.

Each time he reached to put something in his mouth, a feeling of rejection welled up from his stomach.

As if he was full, but much more unpleasant.

The wine was also odd.

It wasn't all that nice.

He'd normally look refreshed after taking a swig, but now he looked somewhat sick.

"If something happened, tell us."

"..."

Hans began to press the silent Doga for answers.

"Mr. brother-in-law, no, Doga. Ever since we were stationed together in the slums, I've always been grateful to you. If you can't even let me help you... How can I keep living with myself? How could I show my face to saint Millis?"

"Yessir. But, I don't get it either."

"Lately, has there been something at the castle? Anything? Tell us."

Doga raised his head and saw Hans's serious look.

Doga, like he was told, started to look back in his memory and slowly began talking.

While guarding the Final Gate, a cat had wandered by. He had just finished his lunch and it made him happy.

While walking through the town in his armour, a young soldier had called out to him "You're my idol!" and it made him happy.

While he was guarding the Final Gate, Isolte had come by and when he took a leaf out of her hair, she thanked him and it made him happy.

When Sándor was teaching him a new technique and complimented him, it made him happy.

When he was walking back to the soldiers' lodgings, and a carriage driver nearly ran him over yelling "Beat it dumbass!" but Luke came out from it and even walked him back and that made him happy.

When he arrived at the training ground on Sándor's orders and Ghyslaine and Isolte were there, it made him happy.

When he heard the rumor that "Isolte might be getting married" from a Royal Guard, it didn't make him all that happy.

When he was guarding a party, Isolte appeared in a dress and looked really pretty. Seeing her in a dress made him happy.

When he saw her dance with some guy he didn't know, it didn't make him very happy.

When he saw some nobles' sons talkin' smack about Isolte behind her back, it didn't make him very happy.

When he saw Isolte walking around with some cool guy it made him sad.

When Isolte--

"That's enough, I get it. I understand everything."

Hans interrupted Doga's story.

He had basically understood.

"So basically, you've fallen for this Isolte."

"..."

Doga's face began to redden.

He didn't know why he ended up telling them, but Hans was exactly right.

"And then, when you heard Isolte was getting married and saw that she was in favour of it, it was a shock to you."

"Yessir."

Having it said to him so bluntly, Doga's head fell even further.

It seemed that Hans was right again.

"I get it."

Seeing Doga's reaction, Hans understood.

It really seemed like his brother-in-law had fallen in love.

And at the same time, Hans began to remember his first love.

The only daughter of the greengrocer who lived next-door in his hometown.

There was an age gap of 5 years, but that didn't change the fact that they were childhood friends. She had looked

after him since they were little.

She was a kind, reliable, and pretty older sister.

He had liked her since age 5.

He dreamt of marrying her in the future.

When he grew up, he would apply to be a soldier and after his income stabilised, he would propose. Or that was the plan.

When Hans was 12 she married the butcher's son and the two of them succeeded his family business.

Hans knew him and by Hans's judgement, he was already an old man.

Although they were only separated by 5 years, so he really wasn't that old.

At first he didn't believe it.

He was well built, but by no means handsome.

He thought she was against it and would eventually return to him.

But after a year she was curling close to him with a happy smile on her face, and after seeing the large bulge on her stomach, he finally understood. That night, his pillow was wet with tears.

Perhaps, if he had confessed his feeling for her earlier, he wouldn't have had to have felt like that.

But that's not to say he was unhappy right now.

If he had married her, he wouldn't have married Doga's sister.

Doga's sister was both like and unlike him. She was a sweet and confident woman with a small figure.

And the product of their love was now eating Doga's food in his stead.

She was a healthy child.

Hans was confident that he was the happiest man in the world.

But he had that happiness because he had suffered heartbreak.

Because of that experience, the moment he realised he was in love with Doga's sister, he took action.

It may have looked frivolous at first.

But from beginning to end, Hans had been completely sincere with Doga's sister.

And he was that much more serious in his gatekeeping job.

Since the day he confessed, he didn't touch another woman.

And because of that, he had triumphed over his rivals and managed to obtain what he had today.

For that reason, Hans said:

"Go propose to Isolte right now."

Hearing that, Doga looked up, confused.

"No, you don't need to propose, being friends is fine. If you can tell her you like her, that's enough."

"..."

"If you sit here and do nothing, you're going to regret it."

"...But."

"Don't think about trying to keep the status quo.

You're a member of the Asura Kingdom's famous Golden Knights.

You're what we garrison members aspire to be.

Raise your head with pride."

Doga thought for a while.

Doga had no idea how his lineage matched up to Isolte.

But in appearances, Doga knew.

The impeccable beauty, Isolte, didn't match him.

He had thought a lot about that.

“It’s fine if it doesn’t go anywhere, just tell her and get rejected. At this rate, you won’t even be able to give her marriage your blessing.”

But with Hans’s words, he reached a conclusion.

“Yessir!”

He would confess to Isolte.

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Translator Notes and References

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Redundant Chapter 9: Isolte & Doga - Final Part

Translators: Pielord Miniman

Editors/Proofreaders : Diohaveto, King of the End, Manch

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Part 1

“How many has it been now?”

Right now, Isolte was in her house connected to the Dojo.

Sitting in the living room opposite her brother.

“...He was the 26th.”

Isolte said that as she hung her head.

Tantris tried to look her in the eyes, but she averted her gaze.

“There’s a rumour going around that you’ve given up.”

“...Yeah.”

“Why?”

Isolte pressed her lips together.

“Well, um... Everybody’s great. They’re all nice, calm people... It’s just...”

“It’s just?”

“Because they’re all so perfect, their flaws all stand out.”

Isolte began to remember all the people she had met with.

The royal family members introduced by Ariel.

They were all lively young men, and did well to entertain Isolte during the meeting.

But... They were all quite honest.

Just as Ariel said, they began to talk about their own individual fetishes.

The five she had met with, were all quite open about it.

Handsome, kind; After they were married, he would try his best to be of use to Isolte: Atole Orpheus Asura.

Handsome, strong; He has a deep understanding of the Water God Style: Beijil Venti Asura

Handsome, elegant; He’s be an extreme help to the finances of the Water God Style: Carlos Siodos Asura.

Handsome, funny; He can make you laugh in any conversation: Daniel Lips Asura.

Handsome, cute; He just makes you want to protect him: Elliot Skiron Asura.

All of them spoke in great detail.

About what they’d do to her on the bed, or places other than the bed, what they’d want her to wear, and finally, what Isolte wanted...

Isolte, who was by no means experienced, couldn’t keep up.

When she realised, she declined.

They said upfront what they thought.

She remembered the repulsive lust those handsome men possessed.

In truth, Isolte had quite a bit of mistrust towards men.

Not all men are like that.

They may not all be, but the world is large and there would have to be some that are.

So Isolte began to think that it would be fine if she just didn't get married.

"What was wrong with them?"

"I cannot say. It's something that I refuse to let from my mouth."

"I get it... They are Asuran royalty after all."

The perverted tastes of Asuran royalty are quite famous.

The upper class wouldn't be satisfied with the normality of the common person's desires.

"But this really is a problem. You turned them all down."

"I haven't rejected all of them yet. There are still some left."

"True, but at this rate, nothing's going to get decided."

Tantris said that and reminisced.

Isolte, whenever she had to choose anything for herself, would always end up being too picky, denying everything, and saying she hated it.

And then someone comes along and takes all the good things leaving her with whatever's left.

That's also the reason she missed the usual age for marriage.

"Alright then, let's do this."

Taking her personality into account, he came to a decision.

"Marry the next man you meet with."

"But, that's..."

"There's no way he'll be able to match all your conditions.

Because you're in a position to choose, you focus on all the bad points.

But after you're married those flaws could seem like trivial matters.

There might be some massive benefit that you missed at first."

Tantris didn't like this kind of overbearing argument.

He believed that ample time to choose is necessary.

And to know that person from the core.

But it's because of 『Ariel's introduction』 that he believed, even if he had to be somewhat overbearing, he had to make it work somehow.

He couldn't allow Ariel's introduction to end in failure.

“...I understand.”

After a short silence, Isolte prepared herself.

It's true that she was too picky.

She'd always been like that.

That kind of personality has a good affinity with the Water God Style, she would soon be the Water God after all, but it had a bad compatibility with marriage.

If things continued this way, she might spend her whole life single.

Water God is indeed a title to be proud of.

To receive praise and admiration from all.

Responding to everyone with a smile, conversing, and returning home in a good mood.

And then come home to an empty house, eat alone and go to bed with no one by your side.

Empty.

She didn't become the Water God to receive praise.

But besides the swordsman within her, another Isolte exists.

And that existence is already alone.

And because of that, she felt empty.

She didn't know whether or not building a family would fill the hole in her heart.

But it would be better to have someone to come home from being admired to boast to.

It's possible that whoever that might be, after listening to Isolte's day, they might demand some perverse act but...

...No, she was resolved.

"So, when and where is the next meeting?"

"Today. Apparently there'll be a carriage to come pick you up."

"Royalty coming to meet me?"

"Yes."

There were three people left.

Isolte didn't know, but after hearing that five had already been rejected, they had decided to go all out.

As a result of the order being chosen via lottery, each one came at her more serious than the last.

"...Hm?"

It was then that Isolte realised.

"The Dojo is quite noisy."

The Dojo was adjoined to the Cruel house.

That said, it was the headquarters of the Water God Style, so it took up a sizeable portion of land.

Normally you wouldn't be able to hear anything, but Isolte was a Water Emperor.

When the noise was mixed with anger and bloodthirst, she'd have to notice.

"Is he already here?"

"It seems a bit soon for that... No I might just be mistaken, but in any case, I'm going. Even if it is a mistake, it isn't

good to keep royalty waiting.”

“You’re right. Let’s hurry.”

Isolte and Tantris nodded to each other and walked towards the door.

Part 2

The Dojo was somewhat noisy.

The disciples in their training uniforms were surrounding someone, berating them with insults.

“Aah, Master, there’s someone here to challenge you! He just showed up demanding that our Master come out.”

Isolte and Tantris turned blue the second they heard that.

If the students were acting this way towards royalty, it would be possible for them to have the Dojo shut down.

He probably didn’t give his name.

The man who had come here to pick Isolte up.

“Cease this!”

At Isolte’s cry the place immediately quieted.

“Open the path! He is my guest!”

“...But this man,”

“All students are to kneel in the Dojo!”

After Isolte had shouted that, the disciples scattered like baby spiders, headed towards the Dojo and kneeled in a line.

Ever since the previous generation they’d been quite fast at this.

Well, that aside.

She would have to quickly apologise.

Thinking that, Isolte looked behind where the disciples just were.

“...?”

Waiting there was a man standing at 2 meters tall.

A shoulder width of at least a meter.

With a massive stone like frame.

Isolte recognised it.

“Doga?”

“...Yessir.”

When she called out and he turned around, it was definitely him.

The completely honest member of the Seven Knights of Asura, the 『King's Gatekeeper』 Doga.

He had previously been standing there looking frightened,

but when he saw Isolte he looked relieved.

“You managed to narrowly escape death. This man is the North Emperor Doga. If he was serious, you people would have...”

Isolte had said that much and then noticed how Doga was dressed.

Knight's formal wear.

Isolte hadn't seen him in formal wear before.

He was always wrapped up in his usual gold or grey armour.

And as if it were his uniform, Ariel didn't say anything.

In addition to his tightly wrapped appearance, he held a bouquet of flowers in his hand.

In Doga's hand it may have looked small, but it was quite a large bouquet.

“What are you doing here? On Her Majesty's orders? Or is an urgent summons?”

Isolte was puzzled.

Doga slowly walked towards her and pressed the bouquet towards her hands.

Isolte didn't think it was possible.

Bouquet and formal wear.

Isolte felt that it wasn't possible.

But what he said next, made the impossible, possible.

"I-Isolte Cruel... I love you! P-Please marry me!"

How was it possible that Doga was a member of the Asura royal family.

She suddenly understood.

He was the only man allowed to guard Ariel's private room.

Luke was a special case and even Sándor, although he was allowed a weapon was assigned to guard some far off room.

Even late at night, he still stands outside Ariel's room.

But considering that, she had never heard that he was a eunuch.

Doga was known to be a harmless man, be he was still a man.

With a large build and strength of a North Emperor.

Considering that, it would be simple for him to take a visit to Ariel's bedroom.

Isolte had always wondered how this man had gotten his position.

But what if he was related to Ariel?

Someone she had known since she was young?

His birthplace was supposedly a small village somewhere in the empire, but there's all kinds of royalty.

Ariel had once fled to a distant country, Doga may have also have hid himself since childhood.

“Isolte.”

At Tantris’s call, Isolte came out of her sea of thought.

He may have been part of something dangerous.

Doga was most likely part of the darkness of the Asura Empire.

If she carelessly got involved, Isolte might be erased.

“What’s the matter?”

Being asked from the front brought her back to reality.

“...Nothing.”

Isolte once more looked at Doga.

“Please marry me.”

He said that.

Without a doubt.

He remained silent after that, but she shouldn’t have misheard.

Doga’s manner was impressive.

Walking in from the front door with flowers in hand and proposing right off the bat.

Isolte would have preferred something slightly more romantic.

But if you think about it, you could call that romantic.

Giving flowers in front of a group of people and proposing was added to Isolte’s list of romantic confessions.

Of course, not in front of a smelly Dojo, but a beautiful fountain, at a luxurious party hall...

But she decided to ignore that.

She was ignoring all kinds of things.

“...Perfect timing. A fellow member of the Seven Knights would match you perfectly.”

“Yes... But, it’s just...”

It was then that Isolte realised where they were.

In the line of sight of the Disciples.

“In any case, we should change the location. Doga, please follow me.”

“Yessir.”

Isolte began walking in the opposite direction.

She didn’t take the flowers from his hands and for a second Doga looked somewhat sad but immediately began to follow Isolte.

Part 3

And so Doga was invited back to Isolte’s estate.

He was sitting huddled up on the sofa that was creaking under his weight.

The bouquet was still on his lap.

Opposite him, Isolte was sitting dignified.

She didn’t give off any sort of aura nor did her face reveal her emotions.

It gave the illusion that she was feeling nothing at all.

Tantris wasn’t around.

He had left them at the entrance to prepare tea.

“ ... ”

And in the meantime, Isolte was carefully observing Doga’s face.

In the face of her gaze, Doga put on a serious expression.

Because he was trembling slightly, it was obvious that he was nervous.

But what Isolte was looking at wasn't that, it was his face.

His simplistic face.

She just wasn't fond of it.

She could try to ignore it, but it just wasn't her preference.

“.....”

Honestly, she thought that maybe one of the previous 5 might have been better.

They were all similarly high spec'd with handsome faces. They were all much more fantastic.

But the next royal family member to come through might be below Doga.

There was also the previous discussion with her brother.

This was something she had to decide.

“In any case, who would have thought you were royalty.”

As Isolte said that with a sigh, Doga looked puzzled.

“I ain't royalty.”

“...Hm? Were you adopted?”

She asked that to find out if he was hiding his status as royalty.

“I was born in a small village in the Donati province and have always been a gatekeeper. Me pops was a soldier of the village and...”

But what came out from Doga's mouth was a story of rising up from a decidedly poor soldier.

No, he might not have been poor.

Isolte had already somewhat heard the story but when he got to the part about his sister's wedding, he started crying, which caused Isolte to start crying too.

“And so, after I heard you were gettin’ married, I thought, before that, I should let you know how I felt.”

“ ... ”

But this basically meant that he was someone completely unrelated.

he had nothing to do with the royalty introduced by Ariel.

And so Isolte decided to refuse him.

It was a slight shame, but she had to uphold the dignity imparted through Ariel's introduction of the suitors.

(Hmm? A shame? why?)

It was then she questioned her own thoughts.

But she immediately reached a conclusion.

He was honest, diligent, and wholehearted.

From what she had heard from him just now, he didn’t have any kind of fetish that would make you draw away.

He had the strength of a North Emperor and as a member of the Seven Knights his wage was secure.

He liked to drink but it didn’t make him violent, nor did he get involved in showy gatherings.

Only his face was no good.

It wasn’t that it was bad, it just didn’t fit with Isolte’s preferences.

“U-um...!”

Seeing Isolte’s complex look Doga spoke up as if resolving himself.

“I-I, ever since I first saw you, I thought you were as pretty as a flower, and, um, I had always loved you!”

Doga said that and once more pushed the bouquet towards Isolte.

“Is that right, from when we first met...”

Isolte’s vision was filled with flowers.

Deep blue flowers.

She didn’t know their name but they were beautiful flowers.

Being compared to these flowers caused her heart to flutter a little.

“...Yessir.”

If Isolte recalled correctly, their first meeting was a battle.

To decide the matter of Ariel’s guard, the time when she fought Doga.

To say that it was then that it started.

Thinking back, he had always been somewhat kind to her.

He always had faith in her.

He wouldn’t take her weapon when she entered Ariel’s room.

Of course, it was also because they were both members of the Seven Knights.

But that wasn’t all there was to it.

Thinking like that, Doga’s face looked about 20% better to her.

It really wasn’t that he looked bad.

Looking at it from a different angle he had a certain charm.

You normally wouldn’t see it because of his helmet anyway.

Or so, Isolte thought.

"No, no...!"

Isolte shook her head.

"I'm terribly sorry but it has already been decided that I would marry royalty at Ariel's introduction."

Right, if she was to choose Doga here, it would disgrace Ariel.

Isolte was a knight.

Her loyalty may not be absolute and unwavering, but she had still sworn it to Ariel.

To disgrace the name of her Lord is something she mustn't do.

"You are also her majesty's knight, you wouldn't go against her will, would you?"

"...Yessir."

Doga looked somewhat troubled.

Just as Isolte said, Doga was also a Knight.

Doga was Loyal.

It was precisely because he was not royalty that he had gained Ariel's faith and been made gatekeeper.

He could not do anything that might betray Ariel's trust.

"...Then if you would please go home."

"Yessir."

She had thought that Doga would try to resist, but he easily stood up and turned his back to Isolte.

Quite easily.

He even looked somewhat triumphant.

It was as if he knew he would be rejected from the start and was simply relieved that he had said it.

It was a respectable position to take, but it was also somewhat disappointing.

"...Haa."

Isolte sighed and looked at the table.

There sat a single flower petal.

Not the bouquet;

He had taken that with him.

“I should have at least taken the flowers from him.”

Isolte muttered that to herself with the petal between her fingers.

Later that day she turned down the royal that came to meet her.

Part 4

The next day.

Isolte was in the training grounds.

One of her duties was to be a sword instructor.

While the soldiers were learning from watching the knights, she was thinking about what happened yesterday.

The royal that had come to meet her, Fraiser Kaikias Asura.

His sexual desire was, as usual, repulsive, but he wasn't a dislikable person.

But compared to Doga, his insincerity was readily apparent.

But instead of refusing him outright, she should have at least told him to wait before she made her decision.

In any case, only two were left.

She would have to screen each of them carefully and choose one

As she was thinking that, a messenger soldier approached her from behind.

“Isolte-dono! Her Majesty has issued an urgent summons for you!”

Isolte could guess what Ariel wanted to talk about.

She had probably heard that Isolte had rejected them one after the other and intended to scold her.

She was resigned to her fate.

Isolte thought that she would have to apologise to Ariel.

“Understood.”

Thinking that, Isolte left the training grounds.

She left behind the knights' rooms outside the training grounds in a cloud of dust.

Normally one would shower when leaving after training, but as the summons was urgent, something like that wouldn't be allowed.

And so, she quickly headed towards the King's chambers.

“Hm?”

As she got close to the inner palace, she felt something was off.

She noticed it was much busier than usual.

Normally one would advance through the empty hallway devoid of both soldiers and knights but today you could see soldiers busily walking about.

Something probably happened.

Isolte was thinking about it but Her Majesty's summons was the priority.

Without hearing anything in particular, Isolte headed towards the King's Chambers.

And so, she arrived before the King's Chamber.

In front of the extravagant door, Isolte furrowed her brow.

The person who should have been standing there was missing.

The single man with the stone like frame in his golden armour.

The man who would never move from his post in front of Ariel's room, the Asura Empire's strongest gatekeeper, Doga.

He wasn't anywhere in sight.

As if in his stead, standing in front of the door in formation were the palace knights.

All of whom had weapons strapped to their waists.

It was an imposing sight.

In addition, they all held themselves like experts.

There were also many lower level noble knights that would normally wouldn't be allowed this far into the palace.

They were most likely Sylvester's men.

They did not fear their rear, each taking optimal movement.

"Lord Ifrit!"

It was then she saw the figure of a certain person.

The man in charge of the guard of the castle, the 『King's Rampart』 Sylvester Ifrit.

"Well if it isn't Isolte. You got here quite fast."

"Just what is going on here?"

Hearing that, Sylvester had quite a difficult face.

As if he was questioning how he should explain it.

Several seconds later, he shrugged his shoulders and said this:

"Her Majesty calls for you."

As if to say that everything would be explained inside.

Isolte gave up upon hearing that explanation and knocked on the door.

"...Isolte Cruel, reporting in!"

"You may enter."

Ariel's voice was the same as always.

Contrary to the bustle outside, her voice was unusually calm.

"Please excuse me."

Isolte opened the door and entered.

What she saw before her was a strange sight.

Ariel sitting at her desk, performing her duties.

Luke standing beside her, arms crossed, looking worn out.

An Imperial Maid standing grim faced and armed.

And Doga.

Doga who was rarely ever seen in Her Majesty's room was standing there.

In one hand he held his golden helmet and in the other, a slightly withered bouquet.

"Good work Isolte. You arrived rather quickly."

"I was in the training grounds... But just what has happened here?"

To which Ariel replied as if it was nothing:

"Doga has decided to retire as my knight."

"What!?"

Isolte looked at Doga.

He looked serious.

It didn't seem like he was doing this as a joke.

“So what exactly does this mean.”

“Well then, I’ll have you hear it from Doga himself... Doga if you could explain it one more time.”

Ariel said that and looked at Doga.

Doga nodded and began to speak.

“Isolte said that she couldn’t marry a knight of Ariel-sama.”

“...!”

A single sentence.

With that, Isolte could guess the reason she was called here.

“That’s not it! So as to not shame your Majesty’s name: “A knight of her Majesty, you wouldn’t go against her will” is all I said.”

“Quiet, listen until the end.”

In response to Ariel’s calm voice, Isolte subsided.

But Isolte’s thoughts were not calm.

Depending on the flow of the conversation, she could be accused of instigating revolt in Doga.

No, judging by the clamor outside, it wouldn’t be strange if that was already the case.

Although she didn’t have such intentions...

“Doga.”

Unbeknownst to what Isolte was thinking,

In response to Ariel’s cue, with some difficulty, Doga continued.

“I thought really hard.

About how I promised my dad that I would protect my sister.

Ariel said that protecting the country and protecting my sister were the same thing.

And Ariel-sama is the queen so protecting her is protecting the country.”

“But my sister said that I had protected her plenty already.

There was nothing to think about, this time I would protect what I loved.”

“I like Ariel-sama. I like this country. I want to protect them.

But my feeling for Isotle are much more special.

So I’ll quit as Ariel’s knight.

And after that, I’ll protect Isolte.”

After he said that, he put his golden helmet back on his head,

And once more he held the flowers out to Isotle.

“ ... ”

Isolte’s eyes were filled with slightly withered deep blue flowers.

The same bouquet from yesterday.

“That’s what he says... What are you going to do Isolte.”

“Huh?”

Isotle was wide eyed at the sudden confession.

“I dont know what kind of conditions you have put out,

but he has chosen you over the Seven Knights of Asura.

It’s more than a woman deserves. What will you do?”

Those words.

It seemed she wasn't called he to be reproached for inciting rebellion in Doga.

And on top of that, she was being asked how she would respond to him.

"B-but, the men that your Majesty had introduced..."

"Forget about that group."

Alarm bells had begun ringing in her heart.

Far greater than when she faced the Fighting God in the Biheiril Empire.

She felt like she would collapse on the spot.

In actual fact, her face was bright red.

"I... I..."

It was then she remembered the story of the first Water God.

The princess that threw everything away to be with the Water God.

With yesterday's conversation, she knew that Doga didn't have much to his name.

His strength, large build, and few family members.

And his position as a member of the Seven Knights.

But he no longer even had that much.

He threw away his position and even his own family to choose Isolte.

With yesterday's conversation, thinking about it carefully, she was somewhat hasty.

Doga said that Isolte was worth more to him than anything.

He was different from all the other nobles and royals she had met with.

Even after he had thrown away that which he held closest to him, he still didn't demand that she become his.

Just like the princess from the story.

In the whole world, the only person who loved her that much, might just be Doga.

Just what was there to be dissatisfied with.

His face was something she no longer cared about.

“ ... ”

Before she realised, Isolte had taken the flowers.

The large blue bouquet.

The slightly wilted flowers seemed as if they were Isolte's symbol.

Even if the flowers wilted Doga was still sure to love them.

In the end, a flower's beauty was but a fleeting thing.

“I may not have much, but I'll be in your care from now on.”

“...Yessir.”

Doga had a bright smile on his face while applause burst out from the surroundings.

Part 5

The proposal in the King's Chambers became well known even among ordinary soldiers.

Doga's former co-workers shed tears of joy, and those who idolised Isolte and wanted to make her theirs shed tears into their pillows.

Doga retired from his position as a member of the Seven Knights and became Isolte's husband.

He was no longer Doga of the Seven Knights, but Doga the house husband.

“You said that you would retire as my knight but Isolte is also a knight of this country.

She is quite strong, but if I were to die, the country would fall into disarray, and she might very well be assassinated.

Of course, you said that you would protect her... Nor do I have any intention of dying.

In any case, how about it? Why don't you protect Isolte while protecting me?”

...But due to Ariel's persuasion it was decided that he would keep his post.

There was no way Ariel would allow the North Emperor Doga to escape from her grasp.

Of course, as punishment for the disturbance he had caused in front of the King's Chamber, he was assigned no small amount of manual labour.

Two members of the Seven Knights of Asura getting married was an excellent outcome for Ariel.

The members of the Royal family that she had called out to were but a trivial matter.

Due to his marriage, the time Doga spent guarding the King's Chambers was greatly decreased.

He would return home at a predetermined time each night, and when Isotle was sent away on duty, he would certainly follow.

As a result, Isotle's position shifted to an exclusive guard for Ariel but that's another story.

The awkward Doga had been accepted by Isotle.

Until they were married they spent that time getting to know each other as friends, and it wasn't until about a year later that the two were officially married.

During that time, a rumour started that Isotle truly didn't like Doga after all.

Because within the Royal palace, during that time, Isotle's treatment of Doga was just as cold as usual.

But after Isotle accidentally referred to Doga as 'Darling' in front of the soldiers and turned bright red while quickly correcting herself, that rumour soon vanished.

Surely, when the two were alone, they were as close as a couple could be.¹

And so, the two were married.

—○●○—

Translator Notes and References

1. Original said: "As close as Mandarin Ducks"

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